

in the abstract. The ideal congregation is faithful. I do not mean that it has only faith *in* God, but is faithful *to* God in the full sense of the term. This faithfulness is shown in several ways. First, the ideal congregation is faithful in attendance. There are few things that give a pastor greater encouragement than the faithful attendance of his members. Much has been said, much has been written upon the subject of regular attendance, and yet there is room for improvement in nearly all, if not all congregations.

The ideal congregation needs no admonishing on this point, for its members are kept away from services only by sickness or some other unavoidable circumstances, and do not as many in real life do, go to church or stay at home resting in a cool rocker just as the spirit (of self) moves them.

Successful school teachers will tell you that chief among the qualities of the ideal school is regular attendance, and that really good results can be obtained in no other way than for the pupil to be regular. This is just as necessary to the ideal church as it is to the ideal school. And, as the ideal pupil makes his way to school through rain and sunshine, mud and snow every day, during the term, so that no absent marks may be made against him, so does the ideal church member make his way to church at every service so that upon the great day of reckoning when the eternal record of God shall be opened he will not be called upon to give excuse for wilful absence.

Faithfulness in attendance does not mean simply to be there *some* time during the service, but means being there *on time*. In the ideal congregation the door is not kept swinging from the time the first hymn is announced until the sermon is pretty well along, but the members are all there ready to join in the first word of the first hymn.

While faithfulness in attendance goes a great ways in making the ideal congregation, faithfulness in some other things goes farther. The members of the ideal congregation are faithful to perform every duty. No Christian lives who does not have duties to perform, and no man can be an ideal Christian if he neglect those duties. And the more faithful he is in performing those duties, the nearer he comes to the high standard of ideality.

These duties are manifold, and require diligence from those who would know and do the same. First among them the ideal congregation recognizes the duties toward God. It gives God its willing service, obeying all of His commands and observing all of His ordinances, omitting nothing

because it may prove objectionable to the perverted taste of some individual. And while the ideal congregation is faithful in its duties to God it is also faithful in its duties to one another. It is true that a feeling of genuine brotherly love is sadly lacking in many congregations, but this may be attributed to the low ideal or lack of any ideal whatever in the minds of its members.

The ideal congregation is free from the petty jealousies that so often enter into the arrangement and execution of its plans.

Men have not all gifts alike, and cannot all do the same work, which was wisely decreed, that confusion and strife might find its way less frequently in our work. However, as often happens, there is more than one in the same congregation who can perform the same work. But the ideal congregation follows Rom. 12: 10. "In honor preferring one another." And sister B does not refuse to sing if sister A presides at the organ, neither does sister A refuse to sing if sister B should preside, but "Let love be without dissimulation, abhorring that which is evil, cleaving to that which is good, being kindly affectioned one to another."

The ideal congregation is also faithful in its duties to sister congregations, not narrow and contracted, but broad and magnanimous, realizing that to live for one's self alone is a *mean* life at most, and that to live for others is a *noble* life at least.

The congregation however congregational, can not be a unit in itself so long as there are other congregations that are members of the body of the true head which is Christ.

This makes the interest of one congregation the interest of another, especially of the ideal, thus mutual assistance is rendered when necessary, and mutual worship is encouraged, and the members are much "given to hospitality."

Even though a congregation may be faithful in all the duties I have mentioned, yet there is one more, the neglect of which not only over-balances any thing else that may be done, and makes it impossible for the congregation to be ideal, but makes all hope of visible prosperity impossible, and that is faithfulness to the pastor. The ideal congregation is faithful to its pastor. Without dwelling on this point note briefly that the ideal congregation, instead of opposing the work of the pastor and proving a stumbling block to him, acts as a strong support holding up his hands as "It came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses'

hands were heavy; and they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword."

Not only does the ideal congregation give spiritual support to its pastor, but it is also faithful in its promises for his financial support, as no congregation can prosper spiritually while it is slack, indifferent, and unfaithful in its business obligations, to the extent that the ideal congregation can which is faithful in all things; and is by its conduct a living commentary on the perfect law of Christ.

Another element of ideality in a congregation is its loyalty to its own denominational literature. There is, perhaps, no truer index of personal character than the supply and nature of literature found in the home. While this is true of the home, it is no less true of the church; and if the doctrine of any church denomination be true, it is essential that that doctrine be taught in the individual congregation. Therefore, the ideal Brethren congregation uses the Brethren Sunday-school supplies and lesson helps in its Sunday-school knowing that the pure Brethren doctrine, as taught in the New Testament is not expounded and better, if as well in any other publication.

For much the same reason the BRETHREN EVANGELIST is found a regular visitor to every home in the ideal congregation.

No one can be an ideal party politician unless he keeps a continued, vigilant watch over the proceedings of his party as a whole, and this can be done only through the means of a party organ. In the same manner no one can be an ideal church worker unless he be well informed concerning the working of his church in general; and this can be done in the Brethren church only by reading the EVANGELIST. And as the whole is no more than the component parts the congregation can not be ideal unless its members are ideal, and as this is such a potent factor in the Brethren cause I repeat that the BRETHREN EVANGELIST is found in every home in the ideal Brethren congregation.

While there are many more virtues that contribute largely toward the ideal, I trust that the few I have mentioned may set us to thinking "on these things," and that we may be led out of darkness into God's marvelous light, so that, as we strive day by day toward the goal of the ideal, growing in grace and perfection, the words of John, "Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected," may be applied to us, and "hereby know we that we are in Him."